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Developments in Indochina

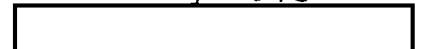
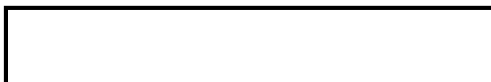
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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

(Information as of 1500)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Chinese come on strong with support for Hanoi in a communique concluding Madame Binh's visit to Peking.

LAOS

Vang Pao has launched a new operation southwest of the Plaine des Jarres.

CAMBODIA

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Local Communist forces are keeping up the pressure on government outposts south of Phnom Penh.

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The joint communiqué concluding Madame Binh's visit to Peking is the strongest government-level Chinese statement of support for the Vietnamese Communists and denunciation of US actions in Vietnam since a Foreign Ministry statement in mid-June complained of US bombing near the Chinese frontier.

The communiqué closely associated Peking with the Vietnamese communists on issues that the Chinese have been chary of addressing in their commentaries on the war in recent months. It said that Madame Binh and Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei reached "identical views" on a wide range of matters. For instance, the communiqué said both sides agree that Washington "must...negotiate earnestly and speedily sign" the draft agreement reached on 20 October, implying that Peking, like the Vietnamese, sees little room for modification in the accord. In a broader sense, the communiqué registered Peking's firm support for Hanoi's position regarding a settlement and for "the war against US aggression." It went beyond other recent Chinese formulations in pledging that Peking would "not flinch from the greatest national sacrifice" in backing the Vietnamese Communists--repeating, apparently for emphasis, Mao's remarks to Madame Binh that the Chinese and Vietnamese "are of the same family." Peking also strongly implied that it intended to increase its support--presumably both material and political--for the South Vietnamese Communists.

Regarding the US, the communiqué charged "with emphasis" that Washington was still unwilling to end the war; it sharply attacked stepped-up American arms shipments to Saigon and other efforts to back the Thieu regime, and called the US bombing of North Vietnam "military blackmail."

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Peking clearly means to underscore its exceptionally warm and effusive treatment of Madame Binh; the New China News Agency announced that a color film of her visit, including her meeting with Mao, would be shown throughout China.

Although the communiqué was dated 1 January, it contained no hint of the announcement the previous day that US bombing would be cut back and that the Paris Talks would resume on 8 January. Peking, in fact, has not yet issued any comment or announcement on these developments, although it has announced Le Duc Tho's arrival in Peking.

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA




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LAOS

With most North Vietnamese infantry units concentrated around Bouam Long, Van Pao has launched operations to improve his holdings near the Plaine des Jarres. Lead elements of one irregular task force have edged to within four miles of Phou Pha Sai, a ridge overlooking the major Communist supply route southwest of the Plaine. To the east, an 850-man irregular unit is moving north from Pha Dong toward the former government base at Khang Kho, some five miles from the Plaine. The irregulars thus far have met only light resistance in both sectors. Given the poor morale of Van Pao's troops, the operations could founder if resistance increases.

The North Vietnamese have only four infantry battalions southwest of the Plaine. Most of these units have been battling government troops for control of positions near a valley east of Sam Thong. Communist commanders may be forced to pull back some of these forces if the irregulars continue to advance toward the Plaine.

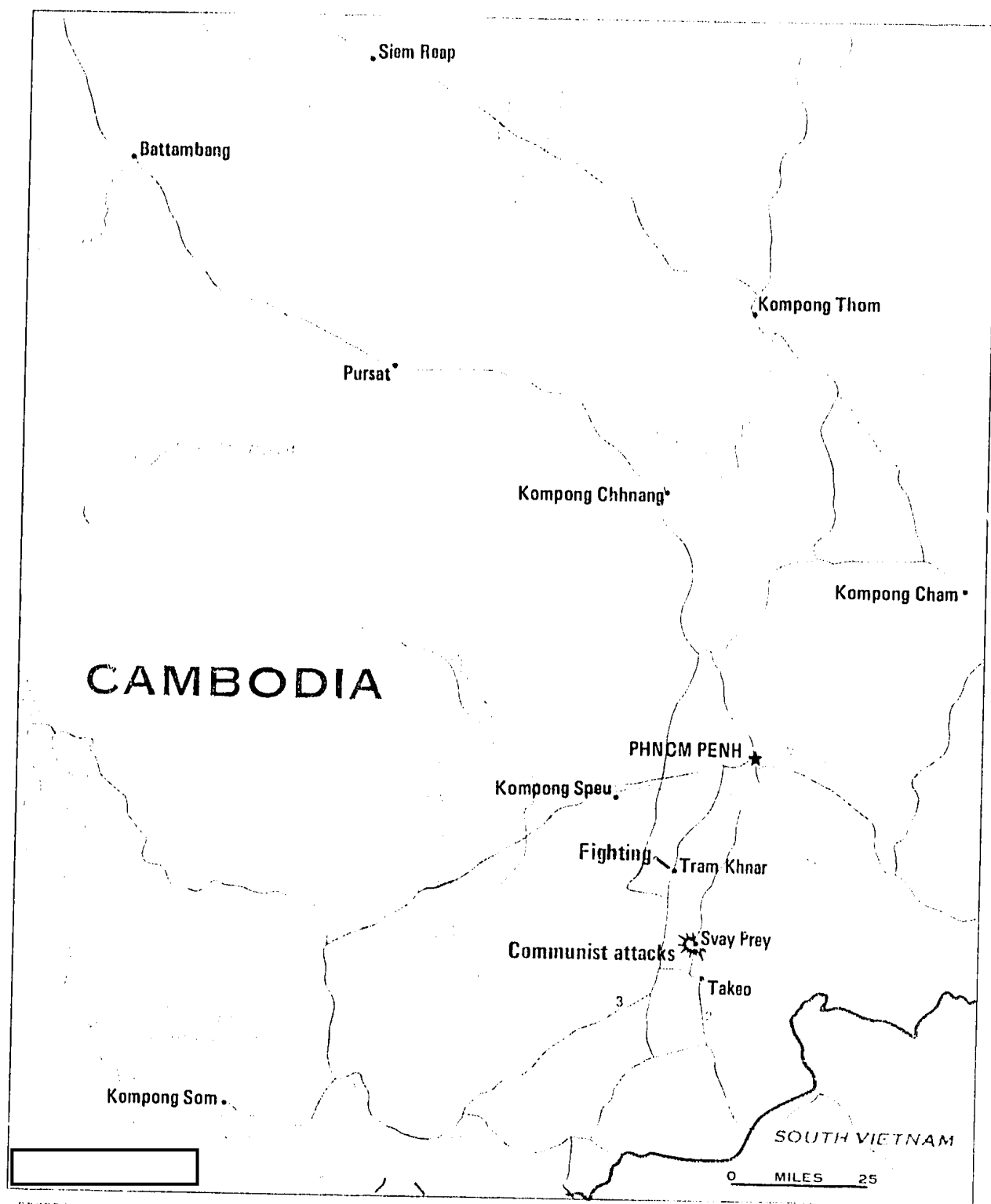


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CAMBODIA

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The Military Situation

Local Communist forces are keeping up their attacks against several government outposts along Routes 2 and 3. The heaviest pressure appears to be focused on Tram Khnar, some 25 miles south of Phnom Penh on Route 3. In the past two days, Cambodian Army troops have been forced to abandon three of their defensive positions near the village. At last report, some fighting was going on in the center of Tram Khnar, which is being defended by

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elements of two government battalions. To the south-east, other Communist forces on 3 January launched an attack on the village of Svay Prey on Route 2. Many homes along the highway north of Svay Prey reportedly have been burned by the Communists. Cambodian losses to date total nine killed and 55 wounded.

This latest round of attacks against the roads may be aimed in part at disrupting rice harvesting operations. It may also be designed to help divert Cambodian units from their efforts to clear and repair Route 2 southward from Takeo to the border.

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